

p.c. MONTAIN

Bto 261

THE SOLDIER'S THANKSGIVING,

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH

OF

QUEBEC,

UPON OCCASION OF DIVINE SERVICE HELD

on the 15th of November, 1843,

AT THE DESIRE OF THE

Major-Commanding, the Officers and the Men

*of the Right Wing of the 2d Battalion of the 1st
or Royal Regiment of Infantry ;*

IMMEDIATELY UPON THEIR SAFE RETURN TO QUEBEC,

AFTER EXTREME DANGER FROM SHIPWRECK,

OFF CAPE CHAT,

AND SUBSEQUENT SEVERE EXPOSURE.

BY GEORGE J., LORD BISHOP OF MONTREAL.

QUEBEC :

PRINTED BY T. CARY & CO.,

Upper Town Market.

1843.

LIE

THAT

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

LIEUT.-GEN. SIR RICHARD DOWNES JACKSON, K. C. B.,

COMMANDER OF THE FORCES IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA,

who has been pleased to unite in the desire for the
publication of this Sermon :

TO MAJOR BENNETT,

Commanding the Second Battalion of the First or

Royal Regiment of Infantry,

AND THE

Officers and Men of the Right Wing of the Battalion,

WITH WHOM THAT DESIRE ORIGINATED,

THE SERMON

IS NOW INSCRIBED,

WITH EVERY FEELING OF RECIPROCAL KINDNESS

AND WITH THE FERVENT WISH

THAT IT MAY BE PERMITTED, IN WHATEVER FEEBLE MANNER,

TO JUSTIFY THEIR ANTICIPATIONS OF ITS EFFECT,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL,

G. J. MONTREAL.

. It is something so common to make apology for productions of this nature, when they have been unexpectedly called for, to be given to the press, that, were there only *common* reason for it, in the present instance, the Author would abstain from what might seem almost a matter of form. But although he has not felt that he could be justified in declining compliance with a request very kindly proposed to him, he does feel it necessary to explain that, owing to the extreme shortness of the notice and the pressure of many occupations, the materials of the Sermon were imperfectly put together, and possibly not all the points were touched upon, which circumstances might have rendered it desirable to embrace. Yet, since it has been asked for, he lets it go into the hands of those who have taken charge of the publication, just as it was delivered.

S E R M O N .

Ps. cxvi. 12, 13, 14.—What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?—I will take the Cup of Salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people.

MY BRETHREN of the Civil Congregation of this Church,—it is a gratifying circumstance that the service for which we are assembled, is held at the spontaneous desire of those gallant and hardy men, here among us, fresh from a scene of suffering and peril, who have not judged it derogatory to their gallantry or hardihood to be sensible of the mercy of their God. The feeling which has prompted them, upon this occasion, to *pay their vows unto the Lord in the presence of his people*, is a feeling which originated purely with themselves, and appears to have animated all ranks of them alike. And I hope it may be regarded as one among many indications of the falsity of a notion found sometimes to prevail among mankind, that the profession of arms is inconsistent with the serious and earnest profession of Christianity; that the soldiers of an earthly sovereign are ill-fitted to be soldiers of the Cross. Against such a notion we cannot too earnestly contend, specially on account of its dangerous effect upon the minds of military men themselves. As if expressly to guard against such an error, the new Testament, (not to go back to the many instances of eminently pious warriors recorded in the old,) very prominently sets before us examples amply sufficient to contradict it. The *soldiers* were among the persons who came to seek instruction from John the Baptist. The individual of whom our Saviour Christ avers that he *had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*, as in him, was a *Centurion* or Captain of a hundred men, in the Roman army. The first Gentile convert, with immediate reference to whose case a special revelation was made to St. Peter, was another *Centurion*,

and we read in that narrative, of a *devout soldier* among them that waited upon him continually. But blessed be God, we may appeal in our own day, to numerous and unquestionable examples, familiarly known; and, upon this occasion, I cannot forbear to mention among them, the author, (for, if I am not wholly mistaken, he was an officer of the army,) of that intensely interesting account of the *loss of the Kent, East-Indiaman*, which has been published as a tract by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The circumstances of that calamity, far surpassing in its horrors any of those connected with the recent occurrence which has here called us together, and differing from this in being attended with the mournful loss of many lives, yet bore in some particulars a close resemblance to it; and the perusal of the tract could not fail to be peculiarly instructive to those who are now acknowledging the mercy of their own deliverance.* In that deliverance we have all a lively interest upon the principle of sympathy laid down by the Apostle, that *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member rejoice, all the members rejoice with it*; nor can we fail to recognise an additional claim to our interest in the obligations which we lie under to the Queen's troops, and in a signal manner to this gallant regiment, for protection, by the divine blessing, in dangers of our own of no very remote occurrence in this Province,—dangers proceeding from a mis-guided portion of our fellow-subjects, whose errors we will cheerfully consign to an oblivion not to be permitted towards our benefactors. The preservation of those who were thus our friends in need, (nobly seconded, indeed, by the loyal part of the population,) must be matter of gratitude to us. As our *friends*, then, my military hearers, I address you: and with the voice of a friend I charge it upon you to remember to your dying day the mercy

* A limited number of copies of this tract, being all that the Quebec Repository of the Society P. C. K. could furnish at the time, were afterwards distributed in the Regiment.

and the warning which you have experienced. O, if there are any among you who, in the imminent crisis of your danger, brought to the verge of death and eternity, were untouched by the thought of your salvation, the sense of your dependence upon God and the need which you had of pardon at his hand,—or who in the hour of your providential deliverance, lifted no vow of praise within your hearts, nor resolution of future devotedness to *him*,—let me conjure you to look back *now* upon the scene, and ask whether if the elements, let loose, by his pleasure, in their fury, had swept you to destruction, you were prepared to go before him. *Prepare to meet thy God*, is a summons which we find recorded in his holy word: and it is not a summons sounded in our ears by all the changes and chances which we witness in this uncertain life,—but sounded loudly like a trumpet of alarm, in the perils which are encountered upon the raging deep? And having just escaped from such a scene, will you not learn from it the lesson of the fear of God? The common contemplation of the power of God in the control of the wilder elements of nature, serves to read you this lesson. *Fear ye not me?* saith the Lord, *will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it, and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail, though they roar, yet can they not pass over it.* The same illimitable power is unceasingly at work in every department of creation, and we are absolutely in the hands of that power, which rescued the Israelites in broad miraculous display, when the waters of the Red sea were made to open themselves for their passage, and *were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left*, and which spoke in Christ, *rebuking the wind, and saying to the sea, Peace, be still, and the wind ceased and there was a great Calm.* By that power, bringing you into danger to make you sensible of mercy, you are now alive

and safe, and under the shelter, at this moment, of the sanctuary itself,—*paying your vows in the presence of God's people.*—You have *seen the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep*: You have seen, *at his word, the stormy wind arise which lifteth up the waves thereof*;—you have experienced the terrors of tempest and of shipwreck in a bleak season and upon an almost desolate shore, and you have been *brought to a haven* where you would then surely have said that you *would* thankfully be: Mark then the words of the Psalmist which follow,—*O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!*

To this call, indeed, I ought to presume that you have, in a body, responded:—Yet suffer me to charge upon you, my brethren, the necessity of cultivating an *abiding* sense of mercy, and manifesting a *permanent effect* from this dispensation. Let it not be thought that your vows are to evaporate in the first bursts of your grateful excitement, or to leave no trace beyond the solemn public service of this day: but seek to be numbered among those, the only safe and happy class of hearers, who, *having heard the word of God, KEEP it and bring forth FRUIT with PATIENCE.*

In the hope and prayer, therefore, that I may assist you in this endeavour, I leave here all notice of particular circumstances attaching to your present case, and pass to the *general* consideration of the duties which are presented in our text, and which lie before you so long as you are spared in the flesh.

First, then, *what shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us?* All his benefits?—How can we describe or count them?—When or where has he *left himself without witness?* Is it not *in Him* that we *live and move and have our being?* Is it not He who *openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness?*—Look at all the magnificence of nature: lift your eyes to the glories of the firmament: survey all the varieties of creation: contemplate all

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the wonders of its animal, its vegetable, its mineral departments: consider their adaptation to the wants of man, and the powers of man to turn them to his benefit: pursue, in all its details, so far as man can follow them, the workmanship of God: ponder upon the mechanism of your own bodies; the principles of life and motion; the contrivances of the organs of sense; the power of mind directing and carrying out the corporeal faculties, acting upon all the resources of Creation, and rendering the universe itself tributary to man:—call up in review the scenes through which you have individually passed in life, the protection which you have experienced, the supplies which have been lavished upon you, the bounties which you have enjoyed, the deliverances which you have had to acknowledge, from the days of helpless infancy to the period of life which you may have been permitted to reach—is it not all, all from the hand of God?—is he not the source, the spring, the centre of all, and does not all depend wholly upon his inexhaustible love?—And can you, then, forbear to enter into the spirit and adopt the language of the Psalmist, *Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name: Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy sins and and healeth all thine infirmities; who saveth thy life from destruction and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, making thee young and lusty as an eagle.*—But stay—in this enumeration of blessings, we find the *forgiveness of sins, the healing of infirmities, the saving of the life from destruction*: Whence is all this? and why, in the scenes which are stamped by eternal goodness and regulated by eternal wisdom, should *sin, infirmity, and destruction* be permitted to have a place?—We cannot rise to the altitude nor fathom the depth of the divine counsel: *it is as high as heaven, what canst thou do?—deeper than hell, what canst thou know?*—but, ill as we are qualified to pronounce upon these mysterious points, needless as it is that we should know much more in relation to them, than the means of remedy, and manifest as is

that general characteristic of our present condition that we do *know* but *in part*,—yet *this* we can discern, that the properties of mercy, beneficence, compassion, long-suffering, and forgiveness, all *suppose*, on the part of the recipient of blessing, the existence either of want or wretchedness, or sin, or some combination of these;—and that, therefore, the most gracious attributes of God himself, can only find their exercise in a world which suffers by the activity of evil influences. The traces of a *fall* are not to be mistaken: the signs of mischief are sufficiently plain: the characters of a curse are written legibly enough upon the face of things below: moral and natural evil, often in the most frightful forms, pervade the world throughout, and make up a vast proportion of the history of man. Sin, sin is the poison which has infected the whole system and has run through all its growth: the transgression of the eternal law; the rupture of our holy connection and happy communion with the source of light and life; the admission of a principle which works within us in opposition to the will of God, and works most strongly in those who least observe it in themselves,—these constitute the causes of our misery, and afford the presage of our destruction;—for, at the close of our little day, we render up our breath, and go before God; and we cannot, in the rags of our unholiness, and with no other introduction or testimony but such as must at once condemn us, go before him with any hope. His awful justice, his immaculate purity, his resplendent holiness, necessarily forbid our approach; and thus consigned to an eternal exclusion from his presence, we have nothing left to look for, but *the blackness of darkness for ever*. Here, then, is the field for the interposition of mercy such as none but God could shew, and the exercise of love such as his wisdom could alone contrive. Without prejudice to the claims of his justice, without violation of his purity and holiness, a method is devised by which man can enjoy pardon and peace and be made the heir of glory—a ransom is found—a substitute is provided—the Cross is planted in the

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ground, and the proclamation is made, by him who hangs upon it,—*Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Herein is Love : not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them :* and in Christ all fulness dwells : all fullness of comfort and mercy, grace and light and hope ; all needful supplies of strength for the service of God and discernment of the way of life, all security of title to a happy portion beyond the grave,—all flow from that only fountain of blessing, and the *wayfaring men, though fools, cannot err* in reading the inscription where it springs, *whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

What, then, shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? What do we, for the most part, render ?—What return is commonly made on the part of man for the unbounded beneficence and mercy of his God ?—Alas ! what other return than one which verifies with sad exactness the declaration that, in continuing his bounties to us, and prolonging our day of grace, he is *kind and good to the unthankful and the evil* ?—O stony hearts and stupified minds !—has God done all this for you and have you so deep an interest at stake, and does he still wait in vain to be gracious ?—will you turn from him and put off the thoughts of him, and fly to any thing to occupy them, rather than to him ?—Do we fail to stay you, or to fix your attention, precisely because we speak to you of God and your immortal souls ?—are these just the subjects upon which you do not choose to be troubled ?—But suppose the case different : suppose some interest awakened in these enquiries and some impression produced of the debt which we owe to God, —what shall we render to him ?—an equivalent ?—a compensation ?—a benefit to him in any conceivable manner ?—a satisfaction of any possible kind ?—Ah ! we are deceived indeed, and nothing can surpass the grossness of our delusion, if we think that we can merit anything by our performances or atone by one

course of actions for the amount of offence accumulated by those of another complexion. The Gospel is a Gospel of Grace—but Grace is at an end—*Grace*, as the Apostle speaks, *is no more Grace*, if we can make out a debt against God for our works. What then, once more, shall we render?—My brethren, you need not be told, at this day, as a piece of information, what you must render to God, nor are there wanting those among you, as I hope and trust, who practically understand it: but, time after time, the preachers of the Gospel must, in many ways, re-iterate the same instructions, in the hope of yet gaining the ears which have been dull of hearing:—You must render to God your *hearts*—you must bring the offerings of your faith, your fear, your trust, your love, your prayers, your praises; and to evince the genuineness of all these, you must render your *obedience*, your conformity of temper, conduct, and character, to the Gospel, your fruitfulness in good works, your profitableness, according to your ability, in his service,—*that so an entrance may be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Woe be to those who, after all the care and culture bestowed upon the vineyard of which they form a portion, make the return of only wild and worthless fruit!

First, however, you must render your *repentance*. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*. A deep sense of our own natural sinfulness, a feeling of compunction for our own actual transgressions,—a longing to escape from the remaining power of sin, and to serve God more truly and devotedly,—these lie at the foundation of our Faith, and without them we cannot be qualified to become parties in the covenant of Grace.

Consider these things, my brethren, and put the question fairly to your own breasts, what do you render to God for all his benefits towards you?—What evidence do you yield of being duly impressed with a sense of those benefits; of having **TURNED TO**

GOD, and of having established yourselves in safe and happy relations with him, through his son Jesus Christ?—Without going over the whole range of enquiry which it is necessary for us to pursue in ascertaining our own spiritual condition,—the resolution of the point itself, whether we are making a due return to God, may often be found within a very small compass, and by means of very simple tests. What does the Psalmist tell us that he will render?—*I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.* Reserving the consideration of what it is to call upon the name of the Lord, we may here observe that that there is one solemn and specific act of our Religion, to which we may at least be warranted in applying the words, *I will receive* THE CUP OF SALVATION; and it is one of the benefits of this act that it may be made to ourselves a touch-stone for the proof of our spiritual state. It was the practice of the Jews to feast, in a religious manner, upon the remains of the sacrifices and drink-offerings; and it was a custom that the master of the feast, should pass round a cup of wine upon the occasion, with certain solemn and eucharistical benedictions. To receive the Cup of Salvation, therefore, although the words may also be taken in a more general and figurative sense, was to attend upon the sacrifices which foreshadowed the immolation of Christ upon the Cross, and to partake in the solemnities which have been just described. And now we come to the point. *We* have our representation of the death and blood-shedding upon the Cross—of a higher character than theirs, because it is retrospective: *We*, in our ordinance, commemorate the *thing done*, of which *they*, in *theirs*, kept alive the *expectation*: the long-looked for Saviour has come, has died, has risen again, has re-ascended to Heaven, has shed down the Spirit of promise. He said **IT IS FINISHED**, and he gave up the Ghost. This is what we are called upon, what we are affectionately invited and solemnly commanded to remember, by THE CUP OF BLESSING *which we bless*, which is the COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. O think not to shel-

ter yourselves, if you refuse this pledge, by pleading (what is true in itself,) that the forms and ceremonies of religion are little in comparison of an exemplary and useful life—or, taking a higher tone, little in comparison of a truly converted heart and spiritual state of the affections. If you acknowledge the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then you admit that you cannot possibly serve God nor lead the life of a Christian, without his special Grace; and can you suppose for a moment that you are enjoying this, while you repudiate an ordinance which he has commanded, and turn your backs upon the appointed remembrance of his love?—And if you would manifest an advanced degree of spirituality in your Religion, begin by a conformity to the example of your master, who, with reference to the use of an appointed ordinance, after insisting upon submitting to it, himself, establishes the rule that *thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*. Never think that it is a mark of spirituality or an effect of evangelical freedom, to take liberties with God and to judge ourselves privileged to dispense with any one thing which he has commanded.

There are other and more common causes, serving to keep men away from the table of the Lord, upon which I cannot now touch, but which are often the subject of notice from the pulpit. Whatever be the excuse, it may be met, at least in part, by some of the arguments which have been just used; and let me conjure all who see the table spread and go their ways, to *ponder these things*.

In conjunction with the act of receiving the Cup of Salvation, the Psalmist declares that he will *call upon the name of the Lord, and pay his vows in the presence of all his people*. Then began men, we are told in an early portion of the Sacred history, *to call upon the name of the Lord*; and this is conceived to be the first intimation of the establishment of public worship among the followers of the true and living God. The Patriarchs also in their removals from place to place, erected altars in particular spots, and there *called upon the name of the Lord*. To call upon the name

of the Lord is, by the exercise of faith in his salvation, to invoke his mercy and to hold communion with him; and we are assured in a passage of the Prophet Joel, cited upon a memorable occasion by St. Peter, that *whosoever shall thus call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*.—How all-important is it, then, that our invocation of the name of the Lord, in our social worship, should be something more than ceremony and form!—How necessary to remember that where the material fabric has been erected and divine service has been regularly established, all is but a mockery of God unless the worshippers themselves, coming to Christ *as to a living stone, are as lively stones also, built up a spiritual house; an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*.—Vain are all our decent solemnities, worthless our solemn meetings, vitiated our beautiful services,* and lost to us all the happy distribution of their different parts, unless we learn to *worship the father in spirit and in truth*; unless we *pray with the spirit and with the understanding*; unless our confession of sin, our deprecation of judgment, our supplication for ourselves, our intercession for others, our holy an-

* Nothing would exceed the pleasing and touching effect given to the beautiful Services of the Church, upon the occasion on which this Sermon was preached, by the chanting and singing of a large choir of men and boys, formed within the battalion by one of the officers, (Lieut. Whitmore,) who has most assiduously and perseveringly devoted himself to this object. The greatest fondness for these performances pervades them all: and it can hardly be doubted that it is a practice which has had a happy influence, generally, upon the tone of character among the men,—the exemplary steadiness of whose conduct, in the whole of the trying scenes through which they recently passed, as well as upon other occasions, has attracted much notice and admiration.

Since the foregoing note was written, arrangements have been made for employing the voluntary services of this excellent regimental Choir, under the direction of the same indefatigable officer and in concert with the Organist, at the morning service of the Civil congregation in the Cathedral, during the stay of the regiment in Quebec. These arrangements, it is hoped, will eminently contribute to the efforts now in progress, for putting the musical performances of the Cathedral upon a satisfactory footing.

In confirmation of what is said above respecting the presumed effect of this cultivation of vocal music, upon the men, (although it is not meant to say that there have been no other circumstances of advantage which may help to account for their correct deportment,) it may be mentioned, with reference to those among them who actually formed the Choir, that, in the hour of their most imminent peril, there were several who evinced, in the most gratifying manner, their composed reliance upon the only hope of sinful man. These individuals, unprompted by each other, yet with a consentaneous feeling, called to mind and repeated to the officer already mentioned, the commencing lines of a hymn expressing in a manner directly appropriate to their awful situation, their trust in the protection of Christ:—

“Why those fears?—behold ’tis Jesus
“Holds the helm and guides the ship.”

thems of praise, our unanimous profession of our faith in the Creeds, our hearing of the appointed portions of the word, our recognition of the Law which we seek mercy for having violated,—truly echo the sentiments and principles which are seated in our hearts. While, therefore, we call, with our lips, upon the name of the Lord, let us remember the charge of the Apostle, *I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*; i. e. that you cheerfully surrender your whole persons, your whole man, to serve the God who made and the Saviour who bought you.

The same test must be applied to all those special acts in which we *pay our vows to God in the presence of all his people*. The vow of baptism declared by the Sponsors : the assumption of that vow upon ourselves in Confirmation : the vows interchanged before God, with solemn prayer and benediction, in the celebration of marriage : the vows of the woman who has been brought safely through the trial appointed, from the date of the Fall, for her sex,—all these will be utterly repudiated before God, if once they are suffered to degenerate into formalities, and nothing more. And here we are irresistibly brought *back* for a moment, to the subject of taking into our hands the *cup of salvation* in the supper of the Lord—for in that act we assuredly *pay our VOWS in the presence of the people of God* : Vows which, if they are rightly understood, are happy as well as holy vows—but they do not comport with the lax and easy notions of the world : they are expressed by the Church in words which are borrowed from a passage of Scripture just above cited, and which her members make their own by the responsive *Amen*, at the close of the prayer : “ And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, “ ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, “ holy and lively sacrifice unto thee : humbly beseeching thee that all we who are,” at any time, “ partakers “ of this holy Communion, may be fulfilled with thy “ Grace and heavenly benediction.” Let our hearts prompt us to say *Amen* to them now : AMEN and AMEN!